

**State of Alabama
Bid #01-X-2105627
Bidder's Conference
February 23, 2001
1:30 PM
State Purchasing Auditorium**

Responses to Questions

Questions #1: For us to better understand, how do you foresee us collecting both functional and technical requirements for each of these (e-government applications) and do you foresee that as consultative charges or do you see that as being recovered in a transaction cost? **DAVIS GLEATON (Qwest)**

Response: Functional and technical requirements are available from the agencies depending on their specific application.

Response: This contract will be a self-funding model, the objective is to recover all costs through the fee structure.

Question #2: The agencies that have already signed up to use the service and go through the process and do this work, are these agencies committed to the project? **RON CASTO (CIMS, Inc.)**

Response: Those agencies identified in the ITB have all expressed an interest in doing e-government applications over the near term. There are other agencies that have since expressed an interest such as the Department of Conservation. Although we believe that these agencies are strongly interested in e-government applications, we cannot guarantee any level of participation or any timetable for participation by agencies.

Question #3: On page 4 (of the ITB, Section III.3 Objectives), are you looking to document management service to be able to supply these documents out to (the Internet)? **RON CASTO (CIMS, Inc.)**

Response: The State is not requiring the transfer of document images at this time. This objective is to have the ability to transmit the electronic format (data) of that document.

Question #4: Are you looking at taking that document and being able to bring it to the state and store it? **RON CASTO (CIMS, Inc.)**

Response: This contract is not requiring the ability to scan documents, transmit and store images in a central location at this time.

Question #5: What about policies and rules and regulations (that agencies currently provide over their websites)? **RON CASTO (CIMS, Inc.)**

Response: A lot of the agencies currently provide this type of information on their websites using downloadable files such as Adobe, HTML or text. Some other information may be made available as a subscription service.

Question #6: What sort of recovery model, how do you want us to recover data after a disaster? **JERRY BAXLEY (AT&T)**

Response: The ITB does not stipulate any specific backup and recovery model. That has been left open to bidders to tell describe your disaster recovery policies and procedures.

Question #7: Explain Section 1.10 - Related Experience. **BRAD KNOX (Digitech)**

Response: The State is looking for a company that has prior experience with e-government applications, not necessarily at the state level. The intention there is to make sure the vendor has in fact done this with five major customers showing their ability to do this with the State of Alabama.

Question #8: Does it have to be another state? **BRAD KNOX (Dititech)**

Response: It does not have to be another state but it would be preferred. The other experience must be comparable to a state level project. This important criterion is designed to make sure that the winning bidder has successfully completed projects of similar scope and complexity before.

Question #9: At what time and who would determine (for) these applications what fee structure will be used? **LANE REEDER (GovConnect)**

Response: The determination as to which fee structure will be used (convenience or transaction) will be determined by *each agency* in conjunction with the bidder. Some agencies are limited by statute from passing on a fee while other agencies have more flexibility.

Question #10: There are different levels of IVR compliance. If the first vendor submits a lower price because they fail to use the higher level (of compliance) and the second vendor did not (use the higher level), does that matter? **BILL KEEP (PSINET)**

Response: Further clarification is provided in the ITB Addendum.

Question #11: Can you describe the approval timeframe from the time of the opening to award? How long do you expect it to take and can you expand the process also? **BOB GHOLSTON (UNISYS)**

Response: The State is unable to give any specific timeframe but this bid is considered a priority within the administration and will be evaluated as quickly as prudence permits.

Question #12: You said several agencies already have merchant agreements in place that you know of. How many and how long are the contracts? **WHITNEY STEWART (eFunds)**

Response: The Department of Archives and History is the only agency with a merchant agreement related to e-government applications and their contract expires this spring.

Question #13: Do you know the volume of Archives and History going through their web site today? **(MARTIN COSTA, Contact Network)**

Response: That information would be available from the agency directly.

Question #14: Are you going to provide a list of names to call each department or are we going to do the research ourselves? What we deliver might not be what they want. There needs to be some kind of requirement. **MARTIN COSTA (Contact Network, Inc.)**

Response: The agency contact list is available on the Internet. (www.state.al.us/advisory.htm) It should be apparent that the State of Alabama operates in a very decentralized manner, department by department, agency by agency. The technology is different. Some is current and some is not current. Some of the licensing processes are very simple. The bidder will need to anticipate developing a wide range of applications, some simple and straightforward and some complex.

Question #15: Is the state going to decide the merchant agreement itself or are we expected to do that? **DAVIS GLEATON (Qwest)**

Response: The bidder must provide merchant services as part of their bid. *Bidders that do not provide merchant services will be rejected.*

Question #16: I am having difficulty understanding how you are going to evaluate these bids. There is a lack of technical descriptions on what you are going to evaluate technically. We are to provide a wide range of services for difference cost. You are going by low cost method here and we are going to have a wide range of technical capabilities for that cost. I have am having a difficult time (understanding the evaluation criteria). **RON CASTO (CIMS, Inc)**

Response: The ITB will be evaluated using the principle of the "lowest responsible bidder" as defined by State statute.

Question #17: You have not described a minimum set of services for us to provide you with a bid. You have a wide range here (of services). **RON CASTO (CIMS, Inc.)**

Response: Section III.8 Contract Services describe the services to be provided under this contract.

Question #18: But we can't change our pricing from agency to agency. **RON CASTO (CIMS, Inc.)**

Response: The contract will be a statewide contract for all agencies within the State that develop and implement e-government applications. The fees will be the same for all agencies.

Question #19: If there is a demand for these services, who is going to be the mastermind to direct which ones are the ones that get done first? **CATHRYNE SLAUGHTER (Computer Science)**

Response: This will be decided by negotiations between the winning bidder and the agencies.

Question #20: Will the agencies themselves be prohibited from using discretionary funds to actually develop particular applications within their agency. For example, on those low transactions based would they be prohibited from using internal discretionary funds to pay for that application development or would that come under the consulting fees? It's a self-supporting self-funding model. There will not be up front fees would the vendor be able to or are the agencies prohibited from using that to help establish a particular application. **DAVID STEPHENSON (LINK2GOV CORP.)**

Response: This contract does not affect an agency's ability to contract for specific applications using their discretionary funds.

Question #21: Is there an evaluation period? Is there anything that would prohibit from getting several projects going at once? **DWIGHT DAVIS (XeroxConnect)**

Response: There is no planned evaluation period of vendor performance before other projects will be allowed to proceed. We hope that there will be a rapid implementation of projects under this ITB, which will require a number of projects underway at the same time.

Question #22: Could we get some information on your existing phone switch, where the IVR would be hosted? Is that something redirected from your existing system to a central place? **DWIGHT DAVIS (XeroxConnect)**

Response: The state is unable to host IVR capability from its switch. The IVR may be hosted at any remote location.

Questions #23: You want to maintain the web enabling capabilities for the application itself. You mentioned security. **BRAD KNOX (Digitech)**

Response: In addressing security, the ITB is addressing the vendor's capability to provide adequate security at their host site and during transmissions of information.

Question #24: Agencies and or departments are not going to require to use this; is that right? **JOE VALLELY (LIVE ON THE NET)**

Response: Agencies are not required to develop e-government applications at this time, but those who do so will be required to use this contract.

Question #25: What is the term of the contract? **RON CASTO (CIMS, Inc.)**

Response: The original intention was for the contract to be a one-year contract with two one-year renewals at the option of the state. However, after further reconsideration, the State has decided to negotiate a three-year contract with termination clauses for just cause termination and funding out. This is reflected in the ITB Addendum to the original ITB.

Question #26: If we locate the IVR here, are you going to provide us the line to connect to the IVR? **MARTIN COSTA (Contact Network)**

Response: All related costs, including facilities and telecommunications costs must be covered in the bidder's cost model.

Question #27: Regarding the Attachment A, the estimated volume, what methodology was used to get the estimate on the first, second, and third year and what was the approximate number of years in the State of Alabama? **BILL DURHAM (Microsoft)**

Response: The estimated transaction volumes were based on discussions with several companies that do e-government and other state experiences.

Question #28: What is the number of users in the State of Alabama that could utilize the services once they are up and running? **BILL DURHAM (Microsoft)**

Response: Initially, it is expected that the main users of the service under this ITB will be professional licensing groups. The large majority of those professionals have access to the Internet. As these applications are successfully implemented, we expect that other applications, such as hunting and fishing license, would cover much larger groups. Many in those groups will not have access to the Internet, which is the reason we are requiring a IVR capability. Although it is impossible to give a specific figure for users and the timeframe during which use will develop, we expect that e-government services provided under this bid and subsequent similar bids would become one of the most important ways the State of Alabama interacts with its citizens.

Question #29: You said all agencies would go through this contract and some would be permitted to build application(s) but (would) have to use merchant services in this contract; is that correct? **HENRY DIPIETRO (Intergraph)**

Response: The intent of the contract is to provide "merchant services" only as one of its primary options. (See Section III.5) Bidders will be required to provide all the services identified in Section III.5.

Question #30: We have seen these (applications) lead to "walk in" over-the-counter type (applications) where you can pay with credit card (over the Internet) but can't pay at the counter. Have you thought about how that might be addressed? **DWIGHT DAVIS (XeroxConnect)**

Response: The state will strongly encourage agencies to provide the same level of e-government service in their office and remote facilities as they provide over the Internet. While the state can not guarantee that, it will be strongly encouraged.

Question #31: Typically, merchant services are priced slightly differently for Internet transactions. Should we modify the cost sheet if we are going to bid that pricing for those point-of-sale (POS) transactions to reflect the difference for the two different types of transactions? **JENNY OPENSHAW (OMG)**

Response: This ITB is not directed at typical point-of-sale (POS) transactions such as state parks and ABC stores. If there was some later requirement to include POS transactions as part of the contract, then that would be negotiated as an additional service.

Question #32: If a vendor would recover in three years versus a vendor recover in one year you would look more favorably; is that correct? **BILL KEEP (PSINET)**

Response: See response to Question #25 and the ITB Addendum regarding contract terms.

Question #33: Coming back to the electronic verification authorization, there is a bill under (consideration at) the national (level), if passed, the State could directly (be) impacted. **JERRY BAXLEY (AT&T)**

Response: While it does seem highly possible that legislation will pass, the State is unable at this time to determine the impact. UETA has been introduced in the Alabama legislature. While it is not possible to state that this legislation will pass during this session, it is a safe assumption that UETA will pass during the three-year term of the contract let pursuant to this ITB.

Question #34: Like a doctor or something where a signature is on file? Once that (legislation has) passed, could we sit down and review that? **JERRY BAXLEY (AT&T)**

Response: In the event any changes in federal or state law have a direct affect on this contract and the implementation of e-government applications, the State has procedures to contractually remedy the situation during the term of the contract.

Question #35: Are you going to send out a list of attendees of this meeting? **NATHAN COBB (PSINET)**

Response: The State will provide a list of all attendees along with the response to all written and verbal questions and the ITB Addendum.

Question #36: Can we request an extension delivery date of this contract about a month? **RON CASTO (CIMS, Inc.)**

Response: The bid response will be approximately 30 days after the date of the ITB Addendum and will be stipulated in the ITB Addendum.

Question #37: There are many competitive differentiators between services provided just like the technology you are talking about which can impact the price as well as the hosting component. The only way I see to analyze this is based on cost. Is that taken into account and if so, how can we make sure we get that across to you. **DAVIS GLEATON (Quest)**

Response: Alabama bid law requires that it accept the lowest responsible bid. Responsible means the bidder meets the criteria of the ITB *and can demonstrate an ability* to perform. Under the bid law, the State is not able to look at qualitative issues. The ITB specifications identify the requirements to be performed.

Question #38: Can you help me understand the difference between responsible bidders and preferred bidders? **DWIGHT DAVIS (Quest)**

Response: The term "preferred bidder" is defined in § 41-16-20, Code of Alabama 1975. The provision permits, but does not require, the State to award the contract to a bidder who has Alabama contacts, such as an office or factory, if that bid is not more than 5% over the lowest bid. Section 41-16-20 is set out in the Addendum.

Questions #39: What was the criterion for selecting a self-funding model versus other funding models? **NATHAN COBB (PSINET)**

Response: There are no budget funds within the State or the agencies themselves for e-government initiatives. The State is looking for some rapid development and implementation of e-government applications. The rapid implementation of successful e-government applications will entice other agencies to follow suit.

Question #40: What impact will this contract have on future awards and ITB's related to e-government? **BILL DURHAM (Microsoft)**

Response: This ITB is the primary vehicle for developing e-government applications. It is anticipated that a similar process will follow the expiration of the contract awarded pursuant to this ITB. E-government applications will be developed and hosted by the bidder using whatever application development tools they choose to use. The State has not established a standard in this area since it does not matter to the agency.